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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: LISBON TREATY RATIFIED

On July 8, the Dutch Senate voted in favor of the Lisbon Treaty, completing the ratification process for the Netherlands, the 21st EU country to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. This comes after the lower house of Parliament previously approved the treaty on June 5. Despite the "No" vote by Ireland, the Netherlands continued to move forward with the ratification process. Approval of this treaty comes after the Dutch "vetoed" the 2005 European Constitutional Treaty through a public referendum. Not taking chances this time, the Balkenende government decided to leave ratification up to the Parliament. The government was able to avoid a popular vote since the treaty had no constitutional implications, therefore avoiding the possibility of a public "No" vote on the treaty. Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen said, "The Lisbon Treaty strengthens the position of the national parliaments in Europe while placing clearer boundaries on the powers of the EU and the member states. It's a modest treaty without constitutional aspirations." European Affairs Minister Frans Timmermans added, "This treaty is essential to making the European Union work more decisively and democratically. To achieve progress in important areas like climate change, energy security, safety and security, asylum and migration, Europeans will have to work together more readily and effectively. With a Union of 27 member states, you need clear ground rules. The Lisbon Treaty provides them."

Gallagher